

OSTRICH FARMING.

The Prospects of Its Success in this Country.
From the New York Times.

"Ostrich Farming, and the Prospects of its Success in this Country," was the subject of some instructive remarks by C. J. Sketchley, late of the Transvaal, South Africa, before the American Institute Farmers' Club, yesterday afternoon. Mr. Sketchley stated that he had several years' practical experience in ostrich farming in Cape Colony. The industry of breeding ostriches for their feathers was begun in South Africa only twelve or thirteen years ago. Prior to that the wild ostriches were killed for their feathers. At present more than \$6,250,000 worth of ostrich feathers are exported from South Africa, nine-tenths of which are the feathers of tame birds. An ostrich is first picked at the age of 6 or 8 months, and again from six to nine months later, and every succeeding six to nine months. The quality and value of the feathers improve with each succeeding plucking. If an ostrich has a plentiful supply of food the feathers will grow and ripen quickly. Ostriches will thrive wherever sheep will. In fact, it is a peculiarity of their class that they will eat and digest almost anything. The breeding of ostriches is managed as follows: A pair of birds which cost at the Cape from \$750 to \$1,200, or what is called a set, viz., a cock and two hens, are enclosed in a paddock or camp any size from forty by 60 yards to two or three acres each, the larger the better. Wood is the best for the enclosure, which should be at least five feet high. The smaller the enclosure the more artificial feeding the birds require. The artificial feed of one ostrich generally consists of one pound Indian corn and about a bucketful of cut green barley, or prickly pear, per day. After the eggs are laid they are put in an incubator for hatching. On the blackboard was the following statement, prepared by Mr. Sketchley:

One pair of ostriches, costing \$1,000, will produce in four years the following:

	Chicks.	Value.	Extended Value.
First year	30	\$100	\$3,000
Second year	30	\$150	\$4,500
Third year	30	\$200	\$6,000
Fourth year	30	400	12,000

	Pounds.	Total Pounds.	Value.
First year	25	750	\$750
Second year	45	1,350	2,100
Third year	60	1,800	2,700
Fourth year	75	2,250	3,375
Total value of birds, \$35,500; total value of feathers, \$12,900; grand total in four years, \$38,300.			

Mr. Sketchley explained that 10 per cent. of the total productive value might be deducted for expenses. An ostrich will commence breeding when about 2 years of age, and the speaker had known of ostriches breeding up to the age of 80 years. Mr. Sketchley alluded to the twenty-two ostriches now in Central Park, which, he said, were brought from South Africa by way of Buenos Ayres. The bringing of ostriches to this country, he said, was a very serious business. The utmost care was necessary to be taken in order to prevent their getting sick and dying. Out of a lot of 200 birds that were sent out from South Africa some time ago, only twenty-eight lived to reach Buenos Ayres.

In answer to a question as to what percentage of young chicks could be raised to a productive age, Mr. Sketchley said that with care and under favorable circumstances a farmer might raise every chick, at any rate not more than 8 or 9 per cent. of the chicks ought to be lost. When young ostriches begin to lay, if they are allowed to sit naturally, they will lay from twelve to fifteen eggs and then commence to sit. They sit for forty-two days, after which they will not begin to lay again for three weeks or a month. If the eggs are taken away as laid and incubated, the ostriches will lay up to thirty eggs without stopping, and if well fed will begin to lay again in two or three weeks. The number of eggs each bird will lay varies from 40 to 90 per annum. Mr. Sketchley said: "From what I have seen of California I believe it would be the most suitable place in this country for the production of ostriches, although I have no doubt they would do well in Virginia, Florida, Texas, Colorado, and other parts where but little frost is had." It is proposed to form a company here for the breeding of these birds in California. Now, I am so far convinced that they will do well there that I have offered to take the entire management of them for three or four years, with no salary, but a percentage of the profits, after expenses.

As an example of what had been done by artificial hatching, Mr. Sketchley said that during the year from June 30, 1872, to June 30, 1878, one set of three birds, one cock and two hens laid 188 eggs, which produced

188 chicks; of these eighteen died leaving 170 young birds. Seventy-four of the birds were sold at three months old for \$16 each, and estimating the remaining forty-one birds to have been worth only \$12 each, a return is shown from one set of birds of \$1,676. The next year the same set of ostriches laid 118 eggs, producing seventy-seven chicks, and the first six months of the third year they laid ninety-seven eggs, producing eighty-one chicks, being more than 80 per cent. After this the cock was killed, by a thoughtless man, for its feathers.

Dr. J. Protheroe, who owns the twenty-two breeding ostriches now in Central Park, and who brought them from South Africa, to which country they were brought a year ago from South Africa, spoke briefly on the subject of the care and breeding of ostriches. The speaker called attention to the fact that young ostriches required no artificial food. They would feed themselves by grazing until they were separated for breeding purposes. Dr. Protheroe expects to take his ostriches to California very soon.

The Rev. J. J. Lightbourn was not in favor of raising ostriches for their feathers. He said such an industry only fostered vanity and extravagance, and he did not believe in it. When he plucked a feather from a goose he slept on it, but a feather plucked from an ostrich did nobody any real good. He would not raise tobacco and would not raise ostriches.

Indigenous Potatoes in Arizona.

San Francisco Alta.

The California Academy of Sciences recently held its regular semi-monthly meeting, with Dr. H. Herman Behr, M. D., in the chair. John G. Lemmon, a member of the Academy, who has just returned from a six months' botanical campaign in the rugged range of mountains in Arizona along the Mexican frontier, gave an interesting synopsis of his season's work, during all of which he was accompanied by his talented wife. Prof. Lemmon made a very important discovery in these hitherto unexplored mountain ranges. He found two, and perhaps three, specimens of native indigenous potatoes, some of which were growing in mountain meadows, whose surrounding peaks were 10,000 feet above sea level. There these tubers grew abundantly as large as walnuts, and he has brought with him quite a liberal supply, which will be given to those who will engage to plant and raise potatoes from this stock, for six or eight years, or sufficiently long to bring them up, by proper cultivation, to the size of our domestic varieties. Ruiz and Pavon speak of the early home of the potato as yet undiscovered, but it is generally believed to have been accredited to the high lands of Peru, where some claim it was reported to have been observed as early as 1560. Humboldt, however, failed to find it there, and as Sir Walter Raleigh carried potatoes from Virginia to England in 1586, it appears more likely that they were natives of North America at some point further north than the early Spanish settlements. California was early hunted at its native soil. This important discovery of Prof. Lemmon, seems now to fix it in the mountain meadows of Arizona.

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